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PROCEDURES AND METHODS USED IN COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE
OF THE GIFTED AND MENTALLY RETARDED IN HIGH SCHOOL

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OF THE GIFTED AND MENTALLY RETARDED IN HIGH SCHOOL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is characterized by its unprecedented development in science and technology as well as accompanying problems in social and economic areas. There is new emphasis in education and greater responsibilities are placed on the schools so that they find themselves in a strategic position not of their choosing where they will be judged according to their ability to solve the problems of youth. Until recent years the teachers expanded their services to provide for the various needs of their pupils, but increasing complexities in society have demanded more specialized treatment. The guidance and counseling profession has developed in response to that need, but since the profession had its beginning only about fifty years ago, procedures and techniques are still in the process of being established. Individual and group counseling practices follow different schools of thought, but in general tend to agree in fundamental goals and purposes. However, it is possible that students designated as exceptional present problems requiring special treatment not adequately provided for by commonly used methods. The study was designed to investigate the position and needs of the gifted and the mentally retarded students within selected educational systems.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to collect information concerning procedures and methods currently practiced or

recommended in guidance and counseling of exceptional high school students, specifically those with higher and lower levels of ability. Emphasis was given to discovering problems peculiar to the gifted and mentally retarded students and identifying procedures apart from those commonly used by counselors with students in the middle ability range.

Importance of this study.

In modern America professional educators, and community citizens can no longer neglect the gifted child. In the modern world where tension, distrust, and strife are the keynotes, the potential of our gifted youth is needed as it has never been required before. Leadership is required in all aspects of our world-wide community living. This phase of the secondary school program has special meaning for guidance and counseling personnel.¹

There is the suggestion that the schools are not adequately serving the needs of exceptional students in the following title of an article on the subject, "We Waste a Million Kids a Year."² Gowan further states in his text on guidance, "There is a tendency, even among the adherents of education for the gifted to view guidance as an afterthought."³

Another statement concerns students in the lower range:

The modification of the high school program to meet the needs of the mentally handicapped children, however, is still a frontier of public education....Helping these students get along with themselves,

¹William M. Cruickshank, Education of Exceptional Children and Youth (New York: Prentice-Hall Company, 1958), 121.

²Mary Conway Kohler and Andre Fontaine, "We Waste a Million Kids a Year," Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXV (March, 1962), 50-68.

³John Curtis Gowan, The Education and Guidance of the Ablest (Charles C. Thomas Publisher: Springfield, Illinois, 1964), p. 242.

to develop self-respect, self-acceptance, and a realistic concept of self-evaluation, and to get along with others forms the major objectives of the program of personnel and social guidance.¹

Although the exceptional students represent a small percentage of the student body, they may require a disproportionate amount of attention to solve their difficult and challenging problems. At the time of this study there is much stress on rehabilitation and re-training to return dropouts, and there is a great unmet demand for trained people. These conditions frequently indicate inadequacies in the counseling program. There should be value in discovering to what extent the high schools are serving the needs of exceptional students, whether or not there is room for improvement, and if so, what steps are indicated. It is possible that schools are generally geared to provide for the middle range of students and that the gifted and mentally retarded are largely neglected.

II. PROCEDURE

Writings of specialists in the field indicated there may be deficiencies in procedures commonly used for coping with problems faced by exceptional high school students, specifically the gifted and the mentally retarded. The problem was to discover the nature of these deficiencies, and to determine whether or not the gifted and the mentally retarded do encounter problems sufficiently different from those of the average to

¹Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 120.

warrant development of new approaches; also what specific techniques are being used by counselors in the field, and what recommendations are made for improvement. Reading was confined to sources concerned particularly with guidance and counseling of the gifted and the mentally retarded. Professional magazines in the field were used as well as texts by authors engaged in research.

To discover practices currently used in high schools, questionnaires were sent to a selected representation of high schools in the Middle West. Nine states were represented. The schools selected had an enrollment of 1000 and above. The number was taken arbitrarily with the purpose of eliminating the smaller schools that would be less likely to have well developed guidance programs for exceptional students. The questionnaire was divided into two parts--one dealing with the gifted and one with the mentally retarded. The questions were similar. Replies were copied by each individual question and put into separate envelopes to facilitate study and analysis. Summaries of statements and opinions given for each part of the questionnaire made certain conclusions possible. These were concerned with attitudes of counselors in regard to the various approaches to guidance and counseling.

III. LIMITATIONS

The reading was limited to sources concerned primarily with guidance and counseling of the gifted and the mentally retarded. Questionnaires were mailed only to a selected representation of high schools in the Middle West. The study was designed as a one-year project so that time was a

limiting factor in terms of obtaining cooperation of counselors in responding to the questionnaire within the required time. To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the many factors involved in evaluation of ability, it was necessary to define the terms gifted and mentally retarded arbitrarily, using only the Intelligence Quotient as a rating factor. Not all replies to the questionnaire included a response to every item.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Gifted. For purposes of the questionnaire gifted students are those having an Intelligence Quotient of 130 and above. Synonymous terms used are superior, talented, bright and academically able.

Mentally retarded. Those students are mentally retarded who are believed to be educable or falling within the IQ range of 50 and 75.

Exceptional. Exceptional students are those who differ from the middle range group sufficiently to require special treatment. For purposes of this study only two categories of exceptional students were considered--the gifted and the mentally retarded.

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Histories of all important cultures leave no doubt that gifted children were recognized for their accomplishments and value to the group. There is mention of Plato's interest in children of superior intelligence and his use of a crude method of testing them for the purpose of organizing classes in science, philosophy and metaphysics. Five hundred years

later the Romans made use of Plato's plan for special education, often using Greek teachers for superior children so that they might be well trained for leadership in war and government. Some attention was given also to the middle group who usually became skilled workmen, but at this time there is no mention of children of less than average ability.¹ In the sixteenth century it was common to select the "fairest, strongest, and most intelligent youths" to be trained for leadership.² Superior people have naturally been important during periods of rapid development in learning or discovery. Examples are outstanding figures of the Renaissance, the Reformation and later the Industrial Revolution.

Unfortunately the mentally retarded had no share in the consideration given the superior students. They were generally regarded as inferior and undeserving.

Notions regarding disability were closely linked with mysticism, spirits, and the occult. It is not unexpected that people in general regarded the handicapped with morbid curiosity and approached them often with fear. Things which are unknown are feared. Oftentimes fear is associated with guilt. As a result the exceptional were avoided, put away, and ignored. Further, there was no scientific basis upon which realistic notions about the handicapped individual could be developed. Research in many fields was unheard of in the period prior to 1800. The concept of individual differences was not understood nor appreciated.³

It is an unpleasant fact that our early American history indicates education was provided especially for the few who were fortunate to possess

¹Bruce Shertzer, Editor, Working With Superior Students (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1960), p. 91.

²Ibid.

³Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 10.

social position and wealth, and democracy was enjoyed largely by that same group. A few people of greater insight worked for the benefit of the retarded and the underprivileged. Such leaders were Horace Mann, Samuel Howe and Dorothea Dix. Any great advancement in the field of special education for either the gifted or the retarded had to wait for developments in related fields such as medicine, psychology, physics and chemistry.

It seems somewhat ironical that through the centuries the gifted child received attention and fame, but it was the retarded child who finally aroused interest in a scientific study of mental ability. A great deal of credit in this field goes to Alfred Binet who began his work on the measurement of intelligence because of his interest in mentally defective children. Binet completed his first scale for the measurement of intelligence after he had experimented with hundreds of children. The scale proved to be a valuable tool for measurement of the mentally defective. Later he determined to extend its use to the measurement of the level of mental development in normal children. Although his test stimulated much interest, he became aware of the fact that his invention was not a perfect instrument. He continued to work for improvement. These scales have been revised from time to time to suit the needs of students and have come to be used extensively as measurements of mental ability from those in the bracket designated as gifted to those believed to be mentally retarded.¹

¹"Alfred Binet," Encyclopedia Britannica (1963 ed.), III, 623-624.

As educational opportunities became more general and students were more unselected, there was pressure to organize special classes for the mentally retarded, and it became understood that children with inferior mental equipment really need different opportunities than those provided for average children. The next step was a logical one--that of providing for the needs of those students who were especially able. This work was begun in the elementary school, but was later assumed by the high schools where it has become an important part of the curriculum.

It is evident from a backward look at the process that the road toward adequate educational opportunity for the gifted and the mentally handicapped has been long and difficult, and now the schools are engaged in an additional service which presents even greater challenges. The problem has become that of providing adequate guidance and counseling for exceptional students. This is a developing profession which is still in the midst of establishing practices and guide lines for efficient functioning. Furthermore, the theories that have been rather widely accepted pertain only to the school personnel as a whole. Therefore, there is little agreement on directives devised for effective guidance and counseling of exceptional students--the gifted and the mentally retarded. Since this area is largely unexplored, a cooperative effort on the part of professionals to collect the best information available on the subject should prove beneficial.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the writings of specialists in the field of guidance and counseling with emphasis on their views concerning services to the gifted and the mentally retarded. There will be an attempt to define the problems faced by exceptional students, to determine whether or not these problems are essentially different from those of the middle range of students and consequently require special treatment. There will be consideration of possible inadequacies in the counseling program. Finally, there will be a summary of promising suggestions by the various writers for the improvement of practices used in guidance and counseling of the gifted and mentally retarded.

Problems of the gifted. Superior students were given no special attention during the early development of the guidance program. The attitude of educators was that since these students were above average in ability, they should be able to look out for themselves. Because the superior student is likely to make his grades in school with little effort, and is frequently cited for excellence in his areas of interest, it is easy to pass him by with small concern. According to Gowan, what is conveniently forgotten is that the able may have special problems which take individual guidance to handle. Some of these may be:

1. They may be faced with an embarrassment of riches in trying to make wise occupational and educational choices.
2. There may be problems attendant upon upward social mobility.
3. They may become aware of developmental tasks before they have the physical resources to solve them.

4. They may have more need than usual to develop the specialized interests which go with certain professional occupations.
5. There may be problems connected with the lack of adult model figures.¹

The National Education Association published some findings of counselors concerning the superior and talented students. They found difficulties in getting superior students to achieve up to capacity. They need help in getting to realize and understand their own abilities and the responsibilities that follow; also in defining educational areas most suitable and in directing energies so that there is no great waste of mental energy. There is the problem of motivating these students and of helping them to appreciate their own accomplishments.²

It is true that studies have shown the gifted to be less subject to instability than those of lower intelligence, but it does not necessarily follow that they have no problems. Difficulties that develop often have psychological effects. Although superior, such children may develop feelings of inferiority because they are out of step with the majority of students and are not too well accepted by them. This attitude is common in small schools where there is little competition and the few good students are unpopular because of their high grades. It is true that even large well-controlled school systems are not free from this type of pressure. Agreeable companionship may be lacking and a feeling of insecurity results. In these early years, approval of the peer group may seem

¹John Curtis Gowan, "The Organization of Guidance for Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX (December, 1960), 275.

²Shertzer, op. cit., p. 168.

much more important than that of adults, and great disappointment along with wasted talents can follow unless social difficulties are put into the proper perspective.¹ When personal problems become too severe for the student to bear, expert counseling has a great duty to perform.

There are many indications that the problems of gifted students are different from those of the larger group either in kind or in degree. In the first place, the fact of superior intelligence places the student in a group apart often with neither his knowledge nor choosing, and he must try to adjust accordingly. He is subject to different treatment by members of his family and all associates. His relationships may be either conducive to good development or they may be a handicap; in either case he must make a greater effort than the average to cope with his social environment. An article by Schmidt expresses the problem thus:

Although the superior and talented student does not have problems entirely different from those of other students, he has certain special problems relating to his superiority. He needs, to a greater degree than do most students, encouragement to use his talents and abilities in a constructive manner.²

Schmitt continues with a quotation from Goldberg:

The gifted, and especially the very gifted, youngster may be faced with the problem of communicating with his peers. He may find himself

¹Paul Witty, Creativity of Gifted and Talented Children (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959), Adapted by Bruce Shertzer, Working with Superior Students (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1960), p. 28.

²Louis G. Schmidt, "Problems of Superior and Talented Students," From Shertzer, op. cit., 177-178.

an outsider, and unless helped by the home and the school to understand and accept his uniqueness as an asset, he may become an anxious, fearful individual, unable to utilize his potential abilities.¹

The plight of the superior student often becomes dramatized by ridiculous escapades which sometimes get into print. It is obvious that such students do not represent the average of their group who are not continually trying to gain attention at any cost. Even so, such articles as the following do illustrate some of the more serious problems of the gifted which are different from the average and in great need of attention. The article in question concerns an incident at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, already notorious for its stories of irrational student behavior:

At four o'clock on a muggy morning eight days ago a 17 year-old boy dressed entirely in black was arrested near a clump of palm trees in a residential area here. He was carrying a notebook with a razor blade neatly sealed in an empty bullet shell....The youth had an IQ above 150, and a scholarship to study science at a Swiss university in the fall. The boys in his group had a record of stealing strange articles mostly to aid their scientific pursuits. As a group they were considered the school's intellectual elite. The boys had little explanation of their senseless escapades other than that they were kids who didn't fit in and who wanted recognition.²

The above type of problem surely seems to indicate that the superior student may have difficulties not usually encountered that do indeed require special treatment. Considering the Lauderdale incident, the following becomes an understatement:

Just now the gifted child is in fashion and in a little danger too....Our uncertainty about exactly how to develop talent is only

¹Ibid.

²Martin Arnold, "Permissive Mothers and Wayward Sons," Des Moines Register, May 29, 1966, p. 11.

one part of the greatest unsolved problem in American education--the problem of how to help every child realize his maximum potential--the problem of individual differences.¹

Again, emphasizing the need for special treatment Demos states:

Finally, guidance for the able involves the realization that counseling is not just the solving of problems but a positive process promoting high mental health. This is important for all students, but it is vital for the bright ones. For in order to deal with more complex aspects of problems and to bring into concert and focus more kinds of abilities, in longer process sequences, for more creative endeavors, under conditions of less external reward, the able youth needs a higher level of mental health than the average. He needs this so that he can handle without disabling stress, and keep longer in tension the problems that he alone can cope with.²

Problems of the retarded. The retarded student is also subject to problems that stand out above those of the middle group. A good description of a typical situation is the following:

'I'm stupid, I can't learn in school.' This was Tommy's response to the question of why he had come to my office. Helped to reflect on this he amplified. 'Yes, my father calls me stupid, the kids tease me about schoolwork, and they won't play with me. My teacher calls me dumb and gets mad at me because I can't remember what I'm suppose to. I guess I must be stupid.'³

It is easy to understand that, because the retarded student is unable to compete with normals on an equal basis, he develops feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness and confusion. He soon thinks of himself as being hopeless and therefore he has no interest in trying to improve.

¹Shertzer, op. cit., p. 37.

²John Curtis Gowan, The Guidance of Exceptional Children (New York: David McKay Company, 1965) p. 78.

³Albert V. Cutter, "The Place of Self-Concept in the Education of the Physically Different Child," Exceptional Children, XXVIII (March, 1962), 343.

He is likely to become negative in his response to all kinds of learning, to teachers, parents, children, and any persons who attempt to help him.

There seems to be general agreement in the field that the mentally retarded child has particular difficulty in making satisfactory resolutions of his problems. Mental retardates, unlike other deviates whose disabilities may be seen, receive from the public mind emotional dislike and repulsion. This, of course, leads frequently to withdrawal or antisocial aggressive behavior.¹

In contrast to the gifted, the mentally retarded show a higher incidence of emotional instability than the nonretarded. Also, that as the intelligence increases, the emotional instability decreases.² The problems of relationships with people are great. All this makes personal adjustment difficult. The student becomes fearful and frustrated. He is unable to win success in anything he tries and must constantly watch others around him being winners. His natural reaction is negative responses of anger, aggression or, if he gives up, withdrawal.

The problems of the retarded child are different from those of the average in proportion to the degree of handicapping conditions he faces. The average child often experiences similar frustrations to some degree, but they are likely to be of short duration and there may be a chance for improvement. Furthermore, the retarded child does not have the comfort of looking ahead to the time when he will be independent and can follow a satisfying vocation of his choice. Until very recent years, the institution was proof of the unsolvable problems of the mentally retarded--even promising educables. Fortunately, public opinion as well as educational

¹Gowan, op. cit., p. 184.

²Ibid.

and governmental agencies have progressed to the point where the institution is seen as a last resort only after all other methods have failed.

Inadequacies of the counseling program. The development of guidance and counseling has been a challenge to educators throughout the relatively few years it has been in progress. Evidences of success and failures, experimentation and research indicate a number of inadequacies or weaknesses in the program. "The guidance of exceptional children is one of the last areas of guidance to be developed. Consequently, guidance theory and practice are, in many instances, in a rather primitive state."¹ Ohlsen comments further on the lack of resources on the subject:

Practically nothing exists in print about guidance for the gifted where:

1. the word 'guidance' is used in its specific not in a generic way,
2. where the article has been written by a practicing expert in the field.

Often the term 'guidance' is used generically to include the whole area of education and a series of generalities results. Few guidance people have specific experience or training for dealing with the gifted and, as a result, there are few articles on guidance of the able written from a professional point of view.²

Certainly guidance services for the gifted should be well defined so that ability can find adequate development. Industry, business and all the professions are competing for competent youth, and studies of population indicated the country does possess intelligent young people in

¹Gowan, Ibid., p. 1.

²Merle M. Ohlsen, Guidance Services in the Modern School (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1964), p. 16.

sufficient numbers to handle occupational needs. The difficulty is that less than half of those capable of completing college even enter, and about two-fifths of those who register do not graduate.¹

Although one could answer with truth that the American educational system today does produce a higher proportion and also a greater absolute number of such people than it has ever done before, and than any other nation has ever done, yet many educators are loath to make this kind of answer because they feel that American education does not do as good a job with gifted children as it might and should.²

Identification, guidance, and motivation of secondary school boys and girls whose ability or performance places them in the upper quarter of the population are concerns of critical importance in the competitive world. The unnecessary misuse of such ability is a failure both for the individual and society. Teachers, counselors, and administrators have been influenced by certain limiting attitudes:

1. A preconceived notion that students' social development will be seriously impaired if their intellectual development greatly exceeds that of their average classmates.
2. A belief that students, if they are bright, need no intellectual challenge or stimulation.
3. A failure to understand and modify the desire, imperative in our society, to be as much like the 'average' as possible.³

There has been a great amount of work done in an attempt to provide adequate course offerings for the gifted, but possibly too much stress is placed in preparing superior students for vocations which will

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Norma E. Cutts and Nicholas Moseley, Teaching the Bright and Gifted (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1957), p. 245.

³Shertzer, op. cit., p. 2.

further the national defense or general economic development. There may be a lack of consideration of the individual.

Today, promoting the full development of the individual is more important than ever because of the pressing national demand for high-ability manpower. Aside from the national need for talent, the neglect of our talented is unfair to the students themselves. Providing school programs designed to salvage and develop talent is consistent with our belief that every individual should be helped toward self-realization.¹

One difficulty in the program of guidance of the gifted is concerned with identification. Research has provided adequate information on the characteristics of the intellectually able, but the methods of discovering them are not definite. Academic success cannot be predicted and abilities cannot be adequately measured. Other problems which the counselor finds difficult are discovering means of motivation to encourage able students who have records of underachievement. This area of wasted talent requires more emphasis to provide workable methods of attack.

Many of the deficiencies in the guidance program for the gifted are the result of inadequate provision for the whole guidance program. Lack of financial support may be the reason for too heavy case loads so that the exceptional students have little opportunity for personal attention; counselors may lack enough space and adequate facilities such as a private office, reception room, clerical desk, secretarial help, space for files and library, office supplies and furniture. Some schools need extra room for scheduled group guidance meetings.

¹Ibid.

It is evident that those who work with exceptional children should have thorough guidance training, yet very often this is not the case. High standards for certification of counselors have only recently been established so that trained people in the field are at a premium. Executives are not always convinced of the urgent need for good counselors and the demand for additional teachers in crowded schools seems more pressing. Teachers and administrators often take the place of counselors, or teachers who have had some courses in guidance and counseling may divide time between counseling and teaching. It is likely in such cases that exceptional students will have small chance for individual attention when difficult problems occur.

Deficiencies in guidance and counseling of the mentally retarded are common but usually do not attract much attention. What counseling retarded students receive is largely concerned with vocational prospects and preparation for some type of work. Gowan makes an interesting statement on the subject:

Personal counseling aspects are found only in a few papers. The Davis paper, 'Counseling the Mentally Retarded,' is such a representative example. Another is Thorne's directive counseling view of the benefits of this type of guidance for the subnormal. It would be interesting to hear a nondirective rebuttal, but the compilers were unable to find one.¹

It has been mentioned above that the mentally retarded show a higher incidence of instability than do the nonretarded, also that they are usually plagued by problems related to frustration, adverse social and family relations and personal adjustment. It would seem that such

¹Gowan, op. cit., p. 182.

severe difficulties would require much more than average services in the way of personal and group counseling. There is need also for counseling service to investigate more carefully work opportunities in the community and to assist in the preparation for fitness required for these jobs.

Suggestions for improvement. Guidance and counseling of the gifted and mentally retarded has developed as an extension of the fundamental guidance service and therefore depends upon the established profession for its philosophies. Some specialization and adaptation of these principles comes through experience and experimentation in the area of needs of exceptional students. It is also evident that the schools have a responsibility to try to solve these problems; also, that success in this part of the school program is not so well defined as it could be. It is possible that some of the inadequacies of the counseling program could be eliminated or improved if school personnel would make a cooperative effort to make use of information already provided by research, to up-grade qualifications of counselors and to improve practices and techniques of guidance and counseling.

Perhaps one fundamental consideration has to do with long-range continuing guidance service brought about by a team approach. A good example is found in the public schools of Atchison, Kansas. They have a permanent committee consisting of the director of special education, two administrators, two high school teachers, and two elementary teachers. This committee follows the students through high school and does follow-up work after they graduate. The committee meets regularly with every

teacher who has pupils with an IQ of 130 or above and once a year with those who have pupils with IQ ratings between 120 and 130. So that this arrangement is constant, the committee members receive extra pay and are given office space and secretarial help.¹ According to Shertzer, "Great opportunities for a dynamic contribution to educational theory and practice lie ahead for those who work with superior students."²

The problem of wasted talents and the loss to the colleges can be attacked by a closely knit program of supervision that remains constant during the school period to the completion of high school. This includes early identification, course planning, guidance and motivation.

New elements in our society call for new educational endeavors. In this age of science, and technology, intelligence is a premium product. The development of programs designed to serve the needs of superior students is a part of this educational task. The success of these programs depends upon firm commitment to the following principles: key personnel must be involved; the task and the population must be defined; the program must avoid educational and motivational discontinuities; responsibility for action must be fixed, and an assessment of outcomes must be made.³

Identification of superior students becomes one of the counselor's most important responsibilities. It is a constant process rather than a decision of the moment. The counselor should take time to go over cumulative records in search of exceptional children. He should remember that talent is an illusive quality which is easily passed by. It may be found in basic school subjects, in art or music, in the area of mechanics or

¹Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 194.

²Shertzer, op. cit., p. 348.

³Ibid., p. 23.

social skill. Here the cooperative approach is especially effective with the teacher, counselor, and parents working together. The teacher can provide valuable information about activities of the student, his abilities and progress. In turn, the counselor can give information to the teacher through group meetings, written reports and test results.

Further research on the use of multiple criteria is necessary in order to discover what identification devices prove to be best predictors of success in specific talent areas and in what combinations these predictions are most effective. We do not know enough about the nonintellective factors in predicting high level achievement. These are socioeconomic status, ethnic and religious group membership, family patterns, as well as self-concept.¹

By this same process the counselor can locate underachievers who usually show discrepancies between their scores on intelligence tests and their grades in school subjects. These people constitute another serious problem for the counselor.

One of the greatest social wastes in our culture is that presented by the gifted child or young person who either cannot or will not work up to his ability. Moreover, this situation often leads to undesirable social or personal behavior as an outward indication of the power within which is seeking some outlet. Counseling and rehabilitating these young people present challenging and important problems for teachers and personnel workers.²

Much research has been done in the area of underachievement of superior students. Their problems have been described and tabulated, and

¹Ibid., p. 46.

²John Curtis Gowan, "The Underachieving Gifted Child--A Problem for Everyone," Exceptional Children, XXI (April, 1955), p. 247.

personality maladjustments have been considered. Characteristics most evident are in the area of social adjustment with difficulties in maintaining a compatible relationship with parents, school associates, teachers and employers. Out of these studies have come some suggestions for counselors so that they may have more success in working with the puzzling problems of underachievers:

1. Make a survey of the percentage of underachievers in your school. If it runs much higher than 15 per cent, there may be problems of morale, antisocial trends, or other factors in the school which should receive special attention.
2. Since gifted underachievers are usually boys by a ratio of two to one, make an effort to assign counselors who are most capable of reaching them; a male counselor may often be more effective than a woman with such boys.
3. Give attention to building up the gifted underachiever in the area where he has a real chance of outstanding success, whether this is athletics, music, a hobby, or an academic course. The real and enduring interest of some strong adult model figure with whom the young person can easily relate should be secured.
4. Give attention to the anxieties which plague boys at this period....Above all, the boy should sense that the counselor has time for him. He should be encouraged to go on with college plans.
5. Try to find membership roles for the gifted underachiever in clubs, activities, and student leadership.
6. Because this type of young person feels insecure and is likely to lack a real peer group, attempt group therapy with a number of gifted underachievers if at all feasible.¹

A conclusion in regard to the problem of underachievement is as follows:

Only by a careful and thorough study of each individual personality can we find the reasons for underachievement. If the individ-

¹John Curtis Gowan, "The Underachieving Gifted Child--A Problem for Everyone," Exceptional Children, XXI (April, 1955), 249.

ual is underachieving, it is because he cannot adequately utilize his inner resources or because he chooses not to. In either case, he needs help from professionally trained counselors.¹

It has become a habit to speak of the gifted in general terms with no differentiation between needs of boys and girls. Especially in this area of vocational opportunities girls need some extra consideration. Twice as many men graduate from college as do girls. Counselors should try to discover why intelligent girls who do well in high school either do not enter institutions of higher learning or fail to complete the course. Three suggestions in this regard are well taken:

1. Establish parent-counselor conferences to teach parents how to encourage daughters.
2. Provide conferences with able girl students and professional women who have high-level academic or intellectual attainment as well as femininity.
3. Provide counselors trained to assist bright girls to examine and understand the roles of career women and the wife and mother, and how both may be pursued.²

Ginsberg describes the position of women in public affairs:

The silent revolution which has been taking place with respect to the role of women in paid employment has surely not been fully absorbed and acted upon by the present generation of girls in school and college. That they will work out of the home at least twenty-five years of their adult life in addition to the years they will spend at home raising their children has not yet been significantly reflected in the educational preparation of young women.³

¹Harry O. Barrett, "An Intensive Study of Thirty-Two Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXVI (November, 1957), 194.

²Robert J. Havighurst, "The School and Motivation," (From Shertzer, op. cit., p. 237.)

³Eli Ginsberg, "Guidance--Limited or Unlimited," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXVIII (May, 1960), 710.

Ginsberg also mentions minority groups who have many available gifted students just waiting for a counselor to take them in hand and point out how they can prepare for work opportunities. He says the gifted young Negroes are just beginning to realize their possibilities following the changes in their position in society as a result of increasing desegregation. "Here the counselor will find pay dirt although he will have to struggle long and hard to discover the most effective ways of 'getting through' to these people.¹

Since parents and the home situation constitute a frequent trouble area, more attention could profitably be given to such difficulties. A study done in Orange County, California, indicates that counselors would do well to spend more time and effort in establishing working relations with the home. The parents have responsibilities in helping their children make decisions, and they often are in need of assistance from the counselor. The study showed clearly that parents usually appreciate the help they receive and would like to have more of it; therefore, counselors, teachers, and administrators should cooperate to give more time to working with parents of gifted students. Some individual and group counseling could be done in summer months.²

Most of the research and writing done in the area of intellectual superiority is concerned with related topics such as characteristics of

¹Ibid., p. 710.

²Lester Beals and Patricia Simmons, "Counseling Needs of Gifted High School Students," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XL (April, 1962), 712-715.

the gifted, underachievement, motivation, courses of study, vocational aptitudes and opportunities. However, the person himself should be at all times the center of interest. Consideration should be given to his adjustment, including his self-image, attitudes, life values and success as he perceives it. Although the team approach is no doubt an effective method, the counselor as the specialist who works with the face-to-face interview is necessarily the most important member of the guidance crew. It is here that problems can be discovered before they reach a point where they become barriers to development, where students can have encouragement in decision making, where they can begin to understand their own abilities, opportunities, and responsibilities. In developing this relationship everything learned from research and experience in the field should be put to use. Counseling techniques must be selected according to student needs and sharpened to suit the sensitive temperaments of very superior young people. The counselor should realize that he will often be obliged to counsel students much more intelligent than he is; pressure will be put upon him to perform courageously and well.

What kind of counseling works best with the gifted? Obviously, not the directive variety. The able are independent-minded and want to figure out problems for themselves. This is not to say that they will not need and even demand information. They are usually more effective than the average in evaluation of their own position. The counselor, therefore, should distinguish between providing information and providing decisions. It is not directive to provide the former, but it is directive to provide the latter.¹

The following statement provides good advice for effective counseling of the gifted:

¹John Curtis Gowan, "The Organization of Guidance for Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX (December, 1960), 277.

Through skillful 'self-directive' counseling in which they consider their abilities and limitations, they may acquire a sense of social responsibility for their gifts. Many gifted children flounder aimlessly because they have never gained insight into the social usefulness of their potentialities. Only when the gifted child regards goals as important and worth while does he put forth effort commensurate with his ability.¹

The frequency of emotional and social adjustment problems discovered in working with gifted students stresses the importance of desirable personality and character qualities of the counselor. Adequate training and experience are basic qualifications, but these must be supported by the invaluable but hard-to-define characteristics necessary for rapport and success in dealing with students. Some of these have to do with empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, a feeling of being at ease, and a respect for the client.²

It is also postulated by many workers in the field of counseling and guidance with able students that the ablest, by virtue of their giftedness, are more likely to be sensitive to facades, to lack of genuineness, to uncomfortableness, and to lack of warmth and understanding than most individuals. The ability to detect sham and hypocrisy are also likely to be accentuated in the ablest.³

A disturbing point here is the possibility that gifted students will not perceive the kindly, understanding qualities that the counselor feels confident of possessing; it becomes finally a matter of students' appraisal and reaction to him. Students who are questioned about their

¹Ruth Strang, "Mental Hygiene of Gifted Children," (Editor, Paul Witty) The Gifted Child (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1951), p. 162.

²Gowan, op. cit., p. 76

³Ibid., pp. 76-77.

attitude toward a counselor often give evasive answers indicating some reservations. "No doubt many confusing, and sometimes contradictory, stimuli were screened by the client, but in some cases the balance happened to fall on one side or the other of the scale."¹

In addition, it was virtually unanimous in the opinions of the counselors who worked with these gifted youngsters that they were much more perceptive than the average with regard to the counselor's strengths and shortcomings in the counseling relationship. It was concluded by the counselors that the differences they felt in counseling with gifted youngsters in comparison with the norm were quantitative rather than qualitative; that is, the characteristics of helping and helpful relationships appear to be important for success with all youngsters, but exceptionally important with the ablest--not a different kind necessarily, but a greater amount of the same.²

A large part of the counselor's effort is centered about trying to evaluate a student's self-concept and trying to bring about a change. This involves helping the student progress from one concept to another which places him in a more favorable light. He may finally see himself a competent person who has control over himself and his accomplishments.

The emotional needs of young gifted students are usually quite demanding and often largely unsatisfied. Adolescence may be too difficult with all the social obligations and responsibilities of growing up. The counselor should try harder to help these people to grow up instead of trying to avoid it.

Vocational guidance is always part of the process, and should be a long-term effort rather than decision making on a sudden inspiration.

¹Ibid., p. 77

²Ibid.

There should be opportunities for vocational exploration and some experiences with various methods of making a living. At this point people who have been successful in their fields of work should be asked to head discussion groups so that gifted students can become stimulated to attempt higher training to fit them for positions of importance and value.

Follow-up studies constitute another area where more effort is recommended.

Follow-up studies provide a means of gathering two types of information of value to the school:

1. Information on the kinds of occupational, educational, and training opportunities which former pupils have found to be desirable and profitable and,
2. Information which allows us to appraise and evaluate the experiences which former pupils had while in school.¹

Closely related to improvements concerned with follow-up, are methods of providing greater financial support for the guidance and counseling program. In order that adequate money will be received, school administrators and the community must be made to realize the value of the service. Any up-grading of the whole service will, of course, improve guidance for exceptional students.

It goes without saying that every guidance program should have the funds and staff to conduct a continuous follow-up of its able students. In the first place, no other group can acquaint the administration so well with the benefits and weaknesses of the program. Second, the community deserves and needs to have an accounting of how well its able graduates are doing in college. Proper publicity on this score will do much to ensure that public support for guidance will be forthcoming. Finally, no other group is so likely in later years to bring credit to the school and the community, and these youngsters should not be lost.²

¹Frank W. Miller, Guidance Principles and Services (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, 1961), p. 231.

²John Curtis Gowan, "The Organization of Guidance for Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XXXIX (December, 1960), 275.

Suggestions for improvement in the area of guidance and counseling for mentally retarded follow the general principles of those for the gifted. Early identification is of first importance and continuity is necessary in the study of individual children with a view toward arranging a curriculum within the range of their abilities so that they can develop at their own rate without becoming overwhelmed by difficulties and frustrations. This curriculum research has been extensive, and interest in it is increasing. However, opinion of specialists seems to indicate a need for improvement in the area of individual counseling.

If the counselor is able to extend his philosophy of democratic and effective education to include the mentally retarded, he will be on the way toward helping these needy students. If the counselor is guided by attempting to provide the best opportunities for development for all children, he will place pupil classification, mental ability ratings and school performance second to general development where academic needs, interests and social adjustment are possible.

Emphasis is placed on the idea that the mentally retarded child is more average than exceptional in most respects. His difference comes in intellectual ability. Some degree of mastery of tool subjects is possible if the child is allowed to progress at his own rate, and to learn skills for which he can see a practical use. He should never be forced to follow a course of study which has a rigid schedule and inflexible requirements. All these activities can well be planned with a view to training the student for future employment, but this end should not be the sole purpose.

The mentally retarded student has a greater challenge to attain a satisfactory adjustment within his family, his peer group and the community. It is in this area that the counselor can make great contributions.

Personal and social skills and attitudes are most important for success. Retardates can usually be placed if they have a desire to work, good personal habits, a sense of responsibility, and ability to get along with others. Placement is most difficult when emotional disturbances are added to mental deficiency.¹

The counselor should be at the center of the group who are planning to satisfy the needs of the retarded. He should encourage parents and teachers to work patiently to train these students as far as their abilities allow, and to remember that social training and character building are more important than academic accomplishments. It is important that the public sees them as cheerful, willing and adjustable people.

Good standards, values, and attitudes should be inculcated as early as possible, since retardates have difficulty distinguishing right from wrong and are easily influenced by peers and adults. With social problems under control, they will function passably well in areas of concrete thinking, but they find abstract reasoning and interpretation of symbolic material incomprehensible.²

While it is true that retarded students need more direction than do the average, and should work closely with teachers and counselor, the attitude toward them should be more client-centered than directive. Like all students they need some freedom of choice in selecting subjects, in developing vocational and personal interests, and especially an opportunity to grow toward independence and self-confidence.

¹John Curtis Gowan and George D. Demos, The Guidance of Exceptional Children (New York: David McKay Company, 1965), p. 187.

²Ibid., p. 185

In lecturing to students on methods of counseling and training with mental defectives, we have often used the analogy that educating the defective is much like photography on a dull day--the subject must be exposed longer to the material to be learned.... Much more attention must be given to creating conditions conducive to learning and much longer practice periods must be provided.¹

Cutter makes a statement concerning the emotional involvement of the learning process which can be lessened somewhat by a skillful counselor:

It is a mistake to assume that physical inadequacy is the only basis of learning deficiency....When parents, teachers, and others discover the real child behind the physical difference and behavioral symptoms, the emotional determined learning difficulties can be overcome.²

A review of the writings of some of the best authors who have done research in the field of guidance and counseling of the gifted and mentally retarded seems to indicate that these exceptional students do meet problems somewhat removed from those of the average range of students. The differences in mental ability in both the upper and lower range cause difficulties in personal adjustment to family, associates and others who may affect decision making. Lack of exceptional skill required for dealing with exceptional students results in a tragic waste of talent at the top of the scale, and maladjustment and vocational inefficiency at the other.

¹Frederick C. Thorne, "Tutorial Counseling with Mental Defectives," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XVI (January, 1960), p. 73.

²Albert V. Cutter, "The Place of Self-Concept in the Education of the Physically Different Child," Exceptional Children, XXVIII (March, 1962), p. 343.

Inadequate financial support of the counseling program has the effect of holding down development of adequate long-range study and planning in matters of identification and motivation of both gifted and mentally retarded students.

The amount of interest, study and research that is being done is a hopeful sign of more effective guidance and counseling in the near future. There is up-grading in qualifications for certification, in college training courses for counselors, and in interest of college students in the field.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and summarize the responses to the questionnaire concerning procedures and methods currently practiced or recommended by counselors in the field of guidance and counseling of exceptional high school students, specifically those with higher and lower levels of ability. Questionnaires were sent to a selected representation of high schools in the Middle West. The area selected includes nine states; within these states, 230 high schools were chosen on the basis of enrollment which was set at 1000 or above. Graphs or charts were not used in illustrating information because most of the questions required subjective and individual responses.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts--one dealing with the gifted and one dealing with the mentally retarded. The questions on each part were similar. Information called for was concerned with relationships established between counselor and students, areas of greatest counseling needs, general effectiveness of counseling methods used, and suggestions for improvement. The number returned was 138, or 60 per cent.

II. PART I. GIFTED STUDENTS

Question number one. What has been your experience in establishing rapport with gifted students? Counselors were generally in agreement on

this question. Of the 138, 103 replied affirmatively. Comments of counselors concerning characteristics of gifted students which contribute to this ease of gaining rapport have much in common. They stressed the fact that the gifted are generally highly verbal, quick to perceive and understand, and to see different points of view. Many replies were simply affirmative or descriptive words were used as "above average," "good," "very good," "excellent," "pleasant to work with." Twenty-five wrote replies which were more complete. They described gifted students as being self-sufficient, capable of solving their own problems, able to take initiative, and able to present clearly any problems they may have. These students usually come in on their own; therefore, rapport is easier and conversation natural. There was the statement that they are aggressive, outgoing and well-adjusted, and they wish to be treated as adults.

However, there is indication of students' needs often unexpressed in many of the comments, and in such cases rapport may be more difficult. One statement was that they respond rationally very quickly, but affectionately somewhat slower. Some are very easy to talk to; others take time and may be difficult. This depends on past school and home experiences. These students often seek help presumably about factual information, but actually they are concerned about more personal problems. Indecisiveness is sometimes a problem which may be the result of pressures, usually parental. Their reaction to this depends upon how seriously they take themselves and how they react to being especially intelligent.

The twenty-five who responded negatively made some interesting observations. Rapport is relatively easy with few exceptions, but if an

easy relationship is difficult to establish, it is very difficult. The gifted can be quite critical of the counselor and may try to test him with some intellectual question and then they respond in accordance with the quality of the answer. A few counselors think they are more difficult than the average, and that they try to stay on a highly factual level at all times, evidently attempting to suppress any personal questions or subjects which may be causing anxiety. These students may be impatient with interviews or conversations. Some give the impression that they know all the answers and need no help. Eleven of this number stated they could see no particular difference in the ease of gaining rapport with gifted students compared with the average.

Question number two. In what areas do you find counseling most needed for gifted students? The results of the tabulation for this question were as follows:

a. Vocational	118
b. Educational	89
c. Personal	90
d. Other	30

This last item contained such additions as inter-personal relations, military obligations, financial problems. Six indicated equal need in all areas.

Question number three. Have you used any other plan for guidance and counseling of the gifted in addition to, or instead of the one-to-one interview relationship? The number who answered yes was 48; and the number who answered no was 90.

Item number four.

All those who answered yes to question number three indicated they use some type of group counseling. These include the following activities:

1. Group guidance on test interpretation and educational planning
for scholarships
2. Large and small information groups
3. Individual study seminar
4. After school study groups -- optional
5. Parent groups
6. Group meetings on college information and procedures
7. Workshops
8. Vocational education information
9. Parent, teacher, student and counselor
10. College and career room group study in the library
11. College representative and students
12. Career days with lectures and tours
13. National Honor Society with educational planning

Some recognized a need but made comments concerning lack of time to develop any other methods of guidance and counseling, or the department is in the process of developing some group procedures.

Question number five. Do you find that commonly used procedures are effective in counseling gifted students? All but eleven of the 123 who reported on this question believe the procedures they are using seem to be effective.

What additional or specific procedures have proved to be most effective? Specific procedures given by the counselors are the following: A gifted student who has definite creative talents requires a more structured interview. Such a student will react very well to a small group session. One counselor set up bi-weekly group counseling sessions for potentially gifted students who were definite underachievers. There was an attempt to provide a very permissive atmosphere for these sessions where students could express ideas and feelings freely.

Another idea was to encourage qualified gifted to enroll in honor courses where they can establish appropriate goals. The counselor and teacher make the gifted underachiever feel they have faith in him, and that he will come through eventually. There was an attempt to make the student see as many opportunities as possible and to keep him going.

One suggestion was that the counselor help the student make realistic evaluations of analysis in terms of the individual. He must be helped to find the human element in the practices of materialism. It was suggested that these students are very sensitive in this area, and here rapport may easily be lost. At this point leading questions to stimulate self understanding are important.

It is necessary to explain their potential to the gifted without giving out definite IQ ratings. The counselor should not pressure gifted students for expressed interest. Often their expression of interest is hard to state at high school age. This is good, for it keeps them from specializing too soon and allows for a broader, liberal arts type of education.

In relating to underachievement among gifted students, a great deal of effort is needed to gain rapport and to attack the problem. Group sessions followed by individual meetings are helpful.

Use the open, acceptive atmosphere and Rogerian style. This is good because they have insight and ability to make decisions.

One counselor asks gifted students to outline their goals--education, or future job. Along with this is emphasis on pursuit of scholarships and evaluation of career potential.

One counselor believes they must be motivated to come and ask to talk about their plans and problems rather than being sent for.

These youngsters many times attempt to cover up personal problems and treat them as though they are unimportant, even though this is not the case. As this type of student is perhaps more intelligent than the counselor, it is necessary for the counselor to guard against a feeling of insecurity. Straight forward answers and ability to say, "I don't know," have proved valuable. Gifted students often rebel against rules, and "joining" them is often effective.

A tutoring system has proved beneficial to gifted students, student-teachers and faculty. Exceptional students in the National Honor Society have this opportunity to teach under supervision. It is good to meet and discuss problems outside of school and school hours.

Try to overcome the idea that superior ability is next to godliness. Stress the necessity and obligation to use their intelligence to the best advantage. Here parents and teachers can help.

Give gifted students a chance to discover sources of information. Give them directions, and they find the answers. The gifted ask for references so that they can read about the different schools themselves. They use the counselor's reference material as much as the counselor does. He should watch for current articles on a higher level dealing with new ideas in many fields and passing them on to the student. The counselor also should try to keep them informed on their current interests and read along with them so that he can be an intelligent listener.

Be sure that students have a good working knowledge of requirements and expectations of an occupation. Students may be attracted by personal needs of accomplishment and not realize the responsibilities involved. Assign research on specific problems or questions. Refer students to resource persons.

The use of aptitude and interest scores seem to be meaningful in vocational counseling of gifted students. The Counselor's Newsletter provides information which can be selected according to interests.

The best teachers should be assigned to top sections of students. With underachievers, check after each semester of work is completed. Be sure this group is registered to take various tests available so that they may have every advantage possible for college scholarship applications.

Help the gifted student into a leadership role of accepting responsibility for others as well--often greater depth of character and concern for mankind as a whole develop in the person who has the potential for contributing much to the nation and society.

Eleven counselors of the 123 who reported, stated they do not believe counseling practices used are effective for the gifted. They find

difficulty in identifying the gifted who are poorly motivated. One stated it is not necessary to employ any particular treatment for the gifted. One said the gifted often rebel against rules and the only way to get along with them is to join them. Five said counselors are overloaded to work adequately with gifted students, and they were too busy to answer the questions.

Question number six. Has there been any follow-up of gifted students? Answers revealed that only twenty-four of the schools have any plan for follow-up. After eliminating repeated plans, nine were listed as follows:

1. An honors class in U.S. History followed for five years activities after high school. The 100% return on questionnaires indicated the prediction for success for the students in the class was far too low.
2. Follow-up of National Merit Finalists and Runnersup
3. Follow-up to check grade point earned in college
4. There was one extensive study of accelerated students one year after graduation.
5. Check for school training above high school and vocations followed
6. Follow-up on students having taken enriched English courses.
7. Continuous follow-up procedure for all classes on a 1, 3, 5 year basis. Special analysis is made of the upper 15%.
8. Lists to record schools attended, plus follow-up on grades.
9. A university project that follows gifted students through the college career.

Many of those who gave a negative answer listed time as a limiting factor; others stated the school was too new to have developed such a feature.

Question number seven. What suggestions can you offer for development of workable procedures in the area of guidance and counseling of the gifted? There was much repetition in the replies. Those that were constructive and contained some individual content are the following:

1. More time should be spent with the gifted; they should be identified earlier; more time should be used in explaining tests and ratings, and there should be more follow-up.
2. The gifted student needs to be permitted to do the things he knows he can do. He shouldn't always be put on the track that the school thinks might be best for him.
3. Encourage students to do much reading in vocational areas.
4. Consider the possibility of assigning all new sophomores who are considered gifted to one counselor who seems to possess the same type of abilities. This would give a good basis for understanding and identification.
5. There should be more latitude in regular classes. This is difficult on account of possible discipline problems involved.
6. There should be more audio-visual material--both vocational and educational.
7. Personal worth must be stressed above materialism.
8. Don't look for techniques. Learn to understand people.
9. Listen; be warm and friendly. Don't offer advice unless requested

and then guardedly. Point to tests which might help them see themselves--ability and interest.

10. Treat gifted students as individuals but refrain from constant reinforcement of the expectations society has for them.

III. SUMMARY OF PART I

The questionnaire seems to indicate that schools generally give some recognition to the top ranking students in high school. There is near agreement that the majority of these students are easy to work with, and that results of guidance and counseling are satisfying to the counselor. However, comments often suggest that the gifted do have problems which are not always easily defined and solved. These problems are not always evident when counseling meetings are mainly concerned with factual information. The good rapport which comes easily often obscures problems of vocational choice, decisions on college courses, or more personal considerations. Gaining confidence with students seems to be at the center of counseling success. Statements concerning the counselor and his role stressed qualifications of training and superior intelligence combined with a very special personality.

Suggestions for development of the guidance and counseling program are concerned especially with identifying the gifted, giving them more counseling time by well trained specialists, enlarging opportunities for getting information and devising ways for them to make larger use of talents during high school training. Follow-up is the best method of evaluating guidance services with a view toward improving procedures.

The replies showed that vocational interests are the most common concern of gifted students. Here the problem is not whether or not a position will be available; rather, it is indecision and confusion resulting from a variety of attractive possibilities. Educational problems are rated high also, showing difficulties of selecting suitable and available schools for further training. Personal problems were checked by 90 counselors, indicating a definite trouble area; furthermore, numerous comments give the impression that personal problems are often difficult to uncover and attack.

In regard to plans of counseling the gifted, only twenty-four counselors indicated a policy instead of, or in addition to, the one-to-one interview. Of these some type of group counseling was indicated, and in most cases cooperative effort of selected staff members was favored. Those most often mentioned were regular teachers, special teachers of accelerated or enriched courses, administrators, parents, specialists in some vocational field.

Except for eleven dissenting opinions, the counselors stated they believe the procedures used were generally effective. The atmosphere created by the Rogerian philosophy is made more permissive and encouraging, so that the most can be made of the student's ability to understand his potential, his opportunities and responsibilities. Counselors believe underachievers should be given greater challenges, more counseling time and more frequent check-ups on grades and development. Gifted students need more information, more chance to explore and do research on subjects of interest.

Deficiencies indicated by the questionnaire. Early identification was stressed by many counselors, but there were few definite techniques or plans to accomplish this. Practices in each case were individual; no guide lines were evident which might be followed as general procedure in high schools.

The large percentage of schools having no plan for guidance besides the one-to-one counseling service indicates a need in that area. Many schools have no group counseling for any purpose, and the counselor often has no substantial help from other staff members in following the progress of exceptional students.

Lack of efficient and meaningful follow-up of gifted students stands out as a serious deficiency. The replies showed general satisfaction with practices of counseling, but opinions were based almost entirely on impressions of the counselor and reactions of students. There was little evidence to confirm these impressions by research on later personality development of the students, their success in vocations, and general contributions to society.

Closely related to lack of studies on follow-up is the lack of suggestions recommending use of research that has already been completed on all problems of guidance and counseling of the gifted. Only one counselor cited a study on the subject of the gifted. Many suggest using more effectively the general practices developed for the mass of students, but few are engaged in trying to develop more specialized techniques.

Constructive suggestions. The comparatively few suggestions for development of procedures were worth while, and served to offset, somewhat,

the general attitude of accepting guidance practices uncritically. If there could be more agreement on general principles recognized by some as being helpful, guidance and counseling practices in high school could be greatly improved.

PART II. MENTALLY RETARDED STUDENTS

Question number one. What has been your experience in establishing rapport with mentally retarded students? Forty counselors made affirmative statements often qualified in some way. Descriptive terms were "good," "no problem" "excellent," "very good," "very cooperative." Some word of caution often was added in regard to being careful of the approach, accept them on their level, discover interests, or be tolerant.

Thirty-eight other counselors gave negative responses. These ranged from ratings of somewhat more difficult to especially difficult. Lack of verbal abilities was mentioned by seven. Other difficulties were that retarded students take more time and patience, and there may be regression rather than improvement. They don't progress in decision making and want to be directed. Conversation is largely one-way. They are sensitive to disapproval, are uncomfortable during interviews and feel set apart from the average.

Fourteen were unable to give definite replies because of special class plans for students. In these cases, mentally retarded students were in other buildings or special rooms where the teacher took care of all problems including guidance and counseling. Fourteen counselors reported no retarded students.

Question number two. In what areas do you find counseling most needed for the mentally retarded students? Responses were as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|----|
| a. Vocational | 68 |
| b. Educational | 35 |
| c. Personal | 71 |
| d. Other | 0 |

Question number three. Have you used any other plan for guidance and counseling of the mentally retarded in addition to, or instead of the one-to-one interview relationship? Responses were as follows:

The number who answered yes 36

The number who answered no 49

This question had poor response.

Item number four. Group plans listed were:

1. Group sessions in special education classes
2. Group discussion of common problems with specialized leaders
3. Various group activities to develop cooperation, responsibility, trustworthiness, personal development.
4. There was some small group counseling built on the idea of self-concept.
5. Parental conferences
6. Group guidance as a supplement to one-to-one interviews
7. Group discussions about occupations and educational opportunities.

Question number five. Do you find that commonly used procedures are effective in counseling mentally retarded students? Seventy-four counselors reported procedures used were effective. Twenty-seven reported no. Seven stated the school has no retarded.

What additional or specific procedures have proved to be most effective? Specific procedures listed were the following:

1. Tend to be more directive--don't deal in abstractions; rather concrete practical things.
2. One must communicate at their level.
3. Work with parents, school psychologist and student working as a team.
4. The counselor should have patience and understanding.
5. Students need more freedom.
6. Join them with complete acceptance.
7. Have frequent conferences with their employers.
8. Hold case conferences.
9. Help parents realize college isn't everything. Be careful in presentation of alternatives.

The counselors who considered the procedures ineffective stated:

1. There is little counseling provided for retarded students.
2. There is a need for diagnostic testing and projection techniques.
3. There is a need for more information on academic progress.
4. There is a need for home visitation.
5. Counselors need time for longer and more interviews.

Question number six. Considering the procedures you have mentioned, has there been any follow-up of mentally retarded students served? Only seventeen indicated a follow-up procedure, and several of these had plans poorly organized or of short duration. Some included it in future school planning. Types of follow-up listed are as follows:

1. An attitude inventory twice last year
2. One is in the process.
3. A follow-up in which the returns were not satisfactory.
4. Regular follow-up for paying positions
5. A continuous follow-up on a 1-3-5 year basis--no analysis of the mentally retarded
6. A post-school adjustment follow-up
7. New school follow-up planned

Various comments gave some indication of reasons for inadequate practices of follow-up for the retarded:

1. Follow-up sporadic
2. Not organized; not carefully done
3. No time
4. Not specifically for these students
5. Program new this year

Question number seven. What suggestions can you offer for development of workable procedures in the area of guidance and counseling of the mentally retarded? Thirty-six counselors made some contribution to this question. The most constructive ideas given are as follows:

1. Perhaps an experimental practicum set-up where a control group is treated in the usual way and the retarded are subjected to experimental techniques.
2. A learning center of low ability students which is an experimental project.
3. Keep the ratio low and concentrate and motivate on the main interest

and ability areas. The best rapport is established in a less than average formal environment.

4. More specially trained personnel and establishment of special programs.
5. These students require much more time than others.
6. Integrate the retarded as much as possible in the total school plan. They are in home rooms with other students and certain elective courses, go through the same testing program and participate in athletics.
7. Extensive use of visual aids. Shelter for handicapped, work-study program.
8. Try to socially promote a retarded student if he shows an honest effort.
9. Classes geared for success--consider retarded as individuals.
10. A specialist is ideal--1-15 ratio
11. In-service training. Better curriculum specifically designed for this group.
12. Need more provisions for smaller classes; more time with the same teacher and the counselor needs to work more closely with the teacher.
13. Find an area of interest and explore this area.
14. Have individual case studies early, plus a thorough physical examination.
15. Teach basics and good health habits.
16. The school psychologist should help with some of the retarded.

17. Sheltered workshops are better than special rooms since they are away from the school.
18. Group activities and projects should be used to facilitate learning of good social behavior.
19. Group work on vocations and training
20. Some of the most effective counseling takes place in ordinary settings such as the workshop or kitchen.

Some who had no constructive suggestions to offer expressed concern about problems of the mentally retarded. Such statements as the following indicate this attitude:

1. This is an area of real concern with us, but I do not have any pat answer.
2. We do not have any program. Hope your research will reveal.
3. Sorry, time doesn't permit further expansion in procedures.
4. None. Not enough experience with them in high school.
5. We have done very little so it is difficult to suggest.
6. I am much too busy to say any more than realize their great potential.
7. The retarded are made to feel different by their school experiences.
8. The program for girls is very limited.

III. SUMMARY OF PART II

Replies to the questionnaire seem to indicate the mentally retarded are given some special attention in most schools. The counselors were about equally divided on responses in regard to gaining rapport. There were often some qualifications in the affirmative replies in regard to necessary attitudes and approaches to these students. Those who reported difficulties mentioned lack of ability to communicate, inability to progress and respond positively. A great need was indicated in the vocational area, and slightly more in the personal. The one-to-one counseling relationship was favored, with only thirty-six indicating some other plan. Group counseling was largely carried on within special rooms, or in connection with various group activities to develop cooperativeness. There was emphasis on the need for more time to work with retarded students both individually and in groups. In most cases the counseling load was too heavy to allow for more attention and treatment.

Deficiencies indicated by the questionnaire. A review of the replies seems to indicate that the mentally retarded are inadequately provided for in many schools. It is true that the number responding was lower because many schools have special rooms that separate them from the rest of the school, some have groups of retarded in other buildings, and some have no retarded students in the school system. However, information given by those who are actively engaged in counseling the retarded can be used to describe current practices.

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Difficulties encountered in gaining rapport were considerable. There is evidently a need for ways and means to overcome communication difficulties, to gain more confidence, to develop interests in motivating these students.

Replies indicate a great need in the vocational area, although more attention seems to be given to work opportunities than to education. Few indicated any specific research to determine community work opportunities, or particular skills retarded students should learn to qualify for positions.

Personal needs for counseling rank slightly above the vocational. Only a few counselors stated anything about the importance of building up a satisfactory self-concept or of developing personal attitudes and habits necessary for social adjustment and success in work situations.

Replies show little follow-up, and most of the plans reported were inefficiently done or not extending over an adequate period. Work records were stressed in most of these, and there was little to evaluate the school's success in educating the retarded.

Constructive suggestions. The various ideas for development of workable procedures show some appreciation of the problems involved in a good guidance program, and realization of present inadequacies. The twenty suggestions given in question seven above indicated interest in many areas. The most important ones are concerned with more time and planning for retarded students, more and better trained counselors, more

cooperative work with the staff and a better set-up to prepare retarded students for vocations, and more attention to personal problems.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Specialists in the field of guidance and counseling tend to agree that the gifted and mentally retarded must cope with problems which are different in kind or degree from those of average students. The gifted must make educational choices from many attractive opportunities. They may not be able to obtain adequate appraisal of vocations, or they may not be given the opportunity to get training in required skills. They may have problems of adjusting to all associates in various relationships because of their intellectual superiority. Personality maladjustment may result in gross underachievement and waste of talents. Better mental health than average is necessary to deal with the complex problems of decision making, and the development of a realistic self-concept which can allow for failures and appreciate potential.

Problems of retarded students are different from those of the gifted, but may be no less severe; in some cases difficulties are even more serious. The differences evident in the retarded are intellectual limitations. Specific problems are related to social relationships with the family, peer group, teachers, and employers. The retarded have the problem of greater emotional instability, of adverse self-concept, of feelings of insecurity and frustration partially brought about by repeated failures. They have problems related to development of independence in academic work and in vocations. There is the difficulty of trying to assume adult responsibilities with inadequate social skills and mental ability.

Both the information gained from the literature and data from the questionnaire indicate special techniques and procedures have been developed for guidance and counseling of the gifted and the mentally retarded. The principles involved in the techniques described in both sources have much in common, and they are designed to apply especially to exceptional students. Those pertaining to the gifted are the following:

Try to plan programs which develop and encourage talent, and which combat the desire to be as much like the average as possible. So that gifted students are able to develop according to their abilities, they should be identified as early as possible. Avoid educational and motivational discontinuities by following the progress of gifted students. Guidance and counseling should be available at all times with the counselor working cooperatively with selected staff members. This type of service calls for selecting a particularly well qualified counselor to handle exceptional students, one who understands the problems of stress, of parental relationships, frustrations, and genuine rewards. The gifted must be helped by home and school to understand and accept their intellectual differences as an asset. Communication between parents, counselor and student is important. The gifted student's problems are often serious and beyond the understanding and appreciation of parents who may be in great need of counseling. The counselor must work with the problems of underachievement of the gifted. He should try to discover attitudes and frustrations which hinder development, and if underachievement is prevalent in the school, he should look for problems of morale, antisocial

trends and detrimental goals in the student population. Group therapy can be profitable with these students.

Stress avenues of success in any area where interest is shown. Find a strong adult model figure for students if possible, and give attention to anxieties common to the teen-age period. When social adjustment is necessary, find membership roles to develop leadership and responsibility. It is agreed that the permissive approach is usually advisable for gaining rapport with gifted students, and that they should be given greater freedom to explore and make decisions than is desirable for the average, and that they should come for interviews on their own. The purpose behind counseling of the gifted who have personal problems is to change the self-concept to one of acceptance and appreciation of abilities. Let the independent-minded figure out problems for themselves whenever it is possible. Distinguish between providing information and providing decisions. Develop self-directive counseling to bring desire for worthwhile goals and insight into their social usefulness. The counseling relationship is more important with the gifted, since they are more perceptive to the counselor's strengths and shortcomings.

Some special techniques recommended for counseling of the mentally retarded are the following:

Mentally retarded students need more direction than do the average, and should work more closely with teachers and counselors, but the attitude toward them should be more client-centered than directive. They should

have some freedom in selecting subjects, and developing personal and vocational interests. The goal should be some degree of independence and self-confidence.

The counselor should be the center of the group who work with retarded students. The counselor should work patiently and try to communicate at their level, accept them completely, and try to develop confidence. He should help parents realize the satisfactions possible for these children in activities they are able to perform. Give them more time than is usually necessary for the average, help gear classes to success, emphasize smaller classes, and confer frequently with teachers. Find an area of interest and explore it thoroughly. Have group counseling concerning such subjects as personal and social skills and attitudes, development of a sense of responsibility, and the advantages of good work habits. Counseling can at times become more informal in work or activity settings; here feelings of difference can be minimized. Social adjustment can be improved by means of participation in school activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the text book writers and counselors in the field tend to be more concerned with the gifted than the retarded. Perhaps the great potential of the gifted serves as a more attractive challenge. However, all sources point to the great unmet need of the retarded, so that there is also a challenge in that field. Since many counselors stated the retarded are taught in special rooms or special buildings, it may be that they are entering a new phase of treatment whereby the public school will

transfer the problem of training to special schools almost entirely. This is, however, contrary to some opinions of counselors who believe retarded students should mingle with the regular class students as much as possible and not be considered apart from the school.

The large number of gifted students who do not perform according to their abilities, and of retarded who do not make satisfactory life adjustments may be an indication that guidance and counseling should be improved. Special techniques and procedures have been devised for use in counseling exceptional students. Some of the best equipped schools are using workable procedures. Schools of smaller enrollments tend to use common techniques for all students. It may be said that counselors in the field seem to be more satisfied with counseling results than are the research people. According to the data compiled from the questionnaire, counselors too often use general impressions as a measurement of good counseling, whereas researchers look at statistical data.

Research is being done in many areas of the subject of exceptional students. These studies include: characteristics of the gifted and the retarded, the nature of talent, underachievement, identification of the gifted and the retarded, motivation, intelligence, aptitudes, and vocations. There is little indication that counselors in the field are getting the benefit of this wealth of material. The difficulty most mentioned is lack of time for study and counseling, inadequate staff, facilities, financial support, and community understanding of needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since research in the study of exceptional students is considerable, perhaps the most important problem is to devise better means of furnishing information to school personnel. Some universities are initiating courses of study with an intern plan which may prove helpful in preparing future counselors for work with exceptional students. The National Education Association has made important contributions in collecting information on studies in the field. This material is easy to obtain.

It is important to do follow-up studies on the progress of former students to get information which makes possible appraisal and evaluation of the experiences which pupils had while in school. The community deserves and needs to have an accounting of how well its able students are doing in college. Proper publicity of this information will do much to gain public interest and support for the guidance program.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

1725 27th Street
Des Moines, Iowa
January 19, 1966

Director, Guidance and Counseling
High School
Personnel Services Department

Dear Counselor:

In preparation for future service in the profession of guidance and counseling, I am doing a piece of research in the field. My attention is focused on exceptional children; namely, the gifted and the mentally retarded.

Are the problems of these groups being adequately treated? A current article by Kohler and Fontaine is entitled, "We Waste A Million Kids a Year." Gowan in his text, "Education and Guidance of the Ablest" states, "...There is a tendency, even among adherents of education for the gifted, to view guidance as an afterthought."

Educators have indicated there are deficiencies in an established core of information in regard to methods and procedures used in the field of guidance and counseling. Certain factors obviously complicate the situation. The profession is comparatively new; personalities of counselors differ greatly; methods and philosophies for procedures vary.

Although the exceptional students represent a small percentage of the student body, they may require a disproportionate amount of attention to solve their difficult and challenging problems. Therefore, it is hoped this piece of research will be able to gather some of the best procedures and techniques now being used in this particular area of guidance and counseling.

So that there will be a certain uniformity in the answers given by different counselors, terms are defined somewhat arbitrarily. The term "gifted" is taken to mean those students having an IQ of 130 and above. The term "mentally retarded" is taken to mean those students believed to be educable or falling within the IQ range between 50 and 75.

APPENDIX A

The enclosed questionnaire has been devised for use only in thesis research, and the information obtained will be kept confidential.

Sincerely yours,

Maurice W. Hansen

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

(Note: Your answers will be considered confidential. They will be used only as data for the graduate project.)

Date _____

Name of Institution _____

Part I. GIFTED STUDENTS

1. What has been your experience in establishing rapport with gifted students?

2. In what areas do you find counseling most needed for gifted students?

- a. Vocational _____
b. Educational _____
c. Personal _____
d. Other _____

3. Have you used any other plan for guidance and counseling of the gifted in addition to, or instead of, the one-to-one interview?

4. If so, describe. _____

5. Do you find that commonly used procedures are effective in counseling gifted students? _____

APPENDIX B

What additional or specific procedures have proved to be most effective? (This question is of prime importance to the research topic.)

6. Considering the procedures you have mentioned, has there been any follow-up of gifted students served? Illustrate.
(Use reverse side.)
7. What suggestions can you offer for development of workable procedures in the area of guidance and counseling of the gifted?
(Use reverse side.)

Part II. MENTALLY RETARDED STUDENTS

1. What has been your experience in establishing rapport with mentally retarded students?

2. In what areas do you find counseling most needed for the mentally retarded students?

- a. Vocational _____
- b. Educational _____
- c. Personal _____
- d. Other _____

3. Have you used any other plan for guidance and counseling of the mentally retarded in addition to, or instead of, the one-to-one interview? _____

APPENDIX B

4. If so, describe. _____

5. Do you find that commonly used procedures are effective in counseling mentally retarded students? _____

What additional or specific procedures have proved to be most effective? (This question is of prime importance to the research topic.)

6. Considering the procedures you have mentioned, has there been any follow-up of mentally retarded students served? Illustrate. (Use reverse side.)
7. What suggestions can you offer for development of workable procedures in the area of guidance and counseling of the mentally retarded. (Use reverse side.)